



# Is the Christian Sabbath Observed on Sunday?

Sixbert SANGWA • June 26, 2024

The observance of a Sabbath day of rest and non-work was a specific command given in the Old Covenant law. [Exodus 20:8](#) instructs, "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*" [Exodus 31:12–18](#) further elaborates on the importance of Sabbath observance as a sign of the covenant between God and the nation of Israel. The various elements of the Sabbath, such as the day of rest, the prohibition on work, and the focus on worship, were all symbolic of the coming of the Messiah, who would provide a permanent spiritual rest for His people.

Significantly, the Sabbath rest instituted by God in the creation account ([Genesis 2:2-3](#)) was not because He was tired, but rather to set an example for humanity to follow. The people under the Old Covenant were constantly "*laboring*" to maintain their standing before God through obedience to the intricate Mosaic law. Just as God rested from His creative work, so too can people rest from their futile efforts to earn salvation. The Sabbath foreshadowed the true spiritual rest that would be found in the Messiah. However, Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law, but are instead under the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul explains, "*You are not under law but under grace*" ([Romans 6:14](#)). The requirements and regulations of the Old Covenant, including Sabbath observance, have been fulfilled and set aside through Christ's perfect life, death, and resurrection. The New Covenant is a covenant of the Spirit, where believers are called to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than the letter of the Mosaic Law ([2 Corinthians 3:6](#)).

While many Christians have traditionally set aside Sunday as a day of worship and rest, in remembrance of Jesus' resurrection on that day, the New Testament does not command or prescribe Sunday observance as the Christian Sabbath. The New Testament simply describes early Christians worshiping on Sundays ([Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2](#)), but this is descriptive rather than prescriptive - it shows what they did, not what they were commanded to do.

Biblically speaking, the Sabbath was an integral part of the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel. [Exodus 31:17](#) states, "*It [the Sabbath day] is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.*" Prior to God giving the Mosaic Law to Israel, there is no record of God requiring Sabbath observance from anyone. And after Jesus' death on the cross, which perfectly fulfilled the requirements of the Law, God nowhere in the New Testament commands Sabbath observance for Christians.

At the same time, the biblical pattern of six days of work followed by a day of rest is a good and healthy practice. Furthermore, setting aside a regular day each week for focused worship and fellowship is undeniably a practice in the New Testament ([Hebrews 10:25](#)). Many Christians choose to observe Sunday in this way, even though it is not commanded. Ultimately, Jesus Himself is our true and eternal Sabbath rest ([Hebrews 4](#)). The rest that the Sabbath symbolized has now been fulfilled in Christ, and Christians are called to enter into a continuous spiritual rest in Him, rather than merely observing a physical day of rest.

In conclusion, the New Testament does not designate Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. There is no biblically mandated Christian Sabbath day. However, honoring Sunday as a day of worship and rest, in light of Christ's resurrection, is a fitting and biblically sound practice for Christians. The key is recognizing that we are no longer under the Old Covenant law, but are free to worship and rest in the grace and freedom found in Jesus Christ. While not commanded, setting aside Sunday as a day devoted to the Lord is a beneficial practice that many Christians have embraced throughout church history. But ultimately, our true Sabbath rest is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled the symbolic meaning of the Sabbath and invites us to enter into a continuous spiritual rest in Him, ceasing from our own futile efforts to earn salvation.

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